



the griffith reporter

the newsletter of friends of griffith park summer/fall 2024



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With Preservation Award**

FROM THE PRESIDENT

There's no good metric for counting the number of people enjoying Griffith Park, but lately it seems to have significantly increased. Perhaps being cooped up during the pandemic continues to spur the craving for outdoor's fresh air and plenty of space in nature.

No doubt, the big draw is the Park's 53-plus miles of soft trails, plus its interior roads closed to vehicles, where the public is afforded safe means for passive recreation. For the most part, hikers, bikers, dog-walkers, runners, equestrians, and families pushing strollers are highly compatible, given they follow the rules, on these non-vehicular passages.

The more developed areas of our colossal urban wilderness, on the other hand, can be deadly, including 4-lane Crystal Springs Drive on the eastern edge of the Park. The heartbreaking and unnecessary loss of bicyclist Andrew Jelmert in 2022, due to a careless driver, set off strong determination to make Griffith Park's automobile roads less perilous.

Crystal Springs Drive and Zoo Drive are currently used excessively as shortcut (and scenic) routes for commuters, often in a hurry. Phase 3 of the Griffith Park Safety and Active Transportation Improvements Project will help make Crystal Springs Drive more "park-like." The 25 MPH speed limit is inconsistent with the road's current highway-like design. Drivers often travel 40-50 MPH, with no provisions for separation from non-vehicular Park users.

The proposed project will implement a "road buffet." Instead of two driving lanes in each direction (north/south), the project will create one lane for cars while the other will be separated to accommodate both bicyclists and pedestrians. The proposed project will also improve crosswalks, and introduce other traffic calming measures at the Los Feliz/Riverside entrance. On Zoo Drive, bicycle lanes will be added to better protect bikers.

This project will be funded with \$4 million earmarked for safety and mobility improvements, thanks largely to California Assemblymember Laura Friedman, with credit to Griffith Park staff and CD 4 for acting quickly with a well-conceived traffic study by experts, Kimley-Horn.

FoGP is fully onboard and grateful this project recently received the green light. In addition to elevating the level of safety for Park patrons, other mammal species will also benefit, along with reptiles, amphibians, and birds. Wildlife "roadkill" is an unfortunate and major challenge in Griffith Park on many roads.

Friends of Griffith Park was born of the activism surrounding the 2005 Draft Melendrez Griffith Park Master Plan which proposed a plethora of commercialization within the Park. Fortunately, the Griffith Park Master Plan Working Group was allowed to create it's own vision on how Griffith Park can survive future generations while being consistent with the intent of Colonel Griffith J. Griffith's extraordinary gift.

The Griffith Park Master Plan Working Group met for several years. Many – not nearly all – of its guiding principles set down in chapter style were finally, and officially adopted by the City as "A Vision for Griffith Park." I was proud to be part of that Working Group dynamism, along with champions including Valerie Vanaman, George Grace, the late Bernadette Soter, and the late Lynn Brown.

Concurrently, 12,000 signatures were collected in a "Save Griffith Park" campaign, both in English and Spanish, to halt further commercialization of the Park. The Parks, River and Open Space Committee (PROS) of the local Los Feliz neighborhood council (GGPNC) picked up the slack after the Working Group's endeavors ended. Then, Friends of Griffith Park came onto the scene as a non-profit advocacy organization.

But we wonder – is the Park losing ground again? Is more commercialization, a desperate attempt to create income for a weak-budgeted Parks Department underway, with much of the public not even being aware of it?

We hope you enjoy reading the positive news in the following pages of our newsletter, in addition to the above encouraging update about reconfiguring Crystal Springs Drive. However, pay close attention to the recent alarming Alcohol Policy approved (see page 6). All the while, the continued closure of the two most affordable activities, the Merry-go-round and the Pony Rides, leaves a void for young families coming to Griffith Park.

Our work is cut out for us, and we need your support more than ever. ✨



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Gerry Hans and Studio Tutto artist Sofia Laçin discuss the "Invisible Neighbors" mural currently taking shape at the Visitor Center (page 16)

Photo: Kathryn Louyse

Ferns in the Dell

~Gerry Hans, FoGP President



Cover photo: Gerry Hans / Western chain fern (*Woodwardia fimbriata*) in lower Fern Dell
Above: Kathryn Louyse / Staghorn high in the foliage

Friends of Griffith Park's research on the history of Fern Dell, which dates to 1912, revealed fern species collected from around the globe. However, the first to be planted were native fern species from the general area and Griffith Park itself, during the years the stream and walls were being constructed. The Montgomery Brothers of New Zealand – rock garden experts – were hired by the Parks Department to carve out the meandering stream pools, dams, and build gravity walls. These native ferns are the ones that have persisted through the hard times of maintenance funding, especially during our recent decades.

Shown on the cover, the Western chain fern (*Woodwardia fimbriata*) is native to much of the Pacific Coast in moist woodlands, especially in the redwood forests of central California. This fern occurs naturally across the Santa Monica Mountains, the San Gabriels and beyond. The stunning apple-green fronds are dense and shoot upward from aggressive rhizomes that spread, leaving no place for weeds to grow.

According to the late Barbara Joe Hoshizaki, in its heyday Fern Dell boasted well over 100 fern species from dozens of botanical genera. As one of the world's leading fern experts, she and devoted members of the Los Angeles Fern Society labored relentlessly in Fern Dell to restore ferns lost over time. They also operated a fern herbarium in the Fern Dell Nature Center – which is now used as housing for a Park Ranger family.

Hoshizaki advised FoGP and its historic-cultural consultants when the Fern Dell Landscape Rehabilitation Plan was conducted a decade ago. Her advice was to plant and nurture only fern species that needed minimal care. She helped prepare a species palette with growing tips for future restoration efforts. Other native fern species also thrive in Fern Dell, including the Western shield fern, California Polypody, and American maidenhair fern. Only the hardiest species currently occupy stream beds, but some non-natives from similar worldwide habitats also do well in Fern Dell.

Fortunately for Griffith Park, Hoshizaki donated many fern species from her own back yard which are being propagated at Long Beach City College, courtesy of Horticulture Department Chair, Jorge Ochoa. Hopefully, at some future time, a reliable irrigation system and removal of invasive plants will allow reintroduction of these ferns to Fern Dell. The diversity of species would be enhanced significantly. ✨

Nature Starts in Griffith Park!

You can help nature thrive by supporting
the efforts of Friends of Griffith Park

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!
JOIN OUR VOLUNTEER TEAM!



Instagram



A Hike for the Senses

~Betina Chimarios Papadeas

I have been hiking Griffith Park since I was three, my sister was four and my brother was five. My mom would lead us from our home south of the boulevard all the way up the hill to the Griffith Observatory – and beyond...



Sometimes a friend from the neighborhood would join, other times it was just the four of us, with me, the youngest, as the caboose.

It was that same friend whose parents got mine to join a hiking group that included Charlie Turner, for whom the trailhead was later named. This trailhead is a gateway to

many other trails that can lead you into the wildest parts of Griffith Park. Because of that, its proximity to my home – and thus minimizing my carbon footprint to get there – and maximizing the number of times I have travelled it, there have been plenty of opportunities to experience the sights, sounds and smells of this path. Despite some of the anthropogenic alterations to the trails over the past few decades, Griffith Park remains a haven of biodiversity and continues to nourish the body-mind-spirit connection.

The hike

The hike up to Mt. Hollywood is a combination of both flat and steep terrain. Starting at the Charlie Turner trailhead and travelling up past the Berlin Forest and over the Vermont Canyon road tunnel, you are presented with a trail that remains relatively flat until you reach Tiffany Overlook, where it steepens up to the four-way junction. At this point, you can go left (west) and pass Captain's Roost and the water tank, or east past Dante's View and then up to Mt. Hollywood. From Dante's you can link up to Hogback and extend your hike further. From Captain's Roost, you can continue toward the Hollywood sign, or any other variation.

Within the 2.7-mile Mt. Hollywood loop, there are distinct patches of vegetation and seasonal blooms, some more dense and biodiverse than others. Some of the flora that can be seen on this trail in the late spring into summer months include laurel sumac, elderberry, buckwheat, phacelia, datura, morning glory, chamise, yucca, tidy tips, bush sunflower, golden yarrow, bush monkey flower, bush mallow, mariposa lily, notable penstemon, black sage, California sagebrush, pineapple weed, silver puffs, and last, but not least, deerweed.

The vegetation supports and provides habitat for the fauna that you might also find on this trail, i.e., "deerweed." Some fauna you might spy on this trail include:

- Mule deer munching on bush sunflowers
- Bees napping in mallow flowers
- Bucks resting under laurel sumac bushes
- Romping juvenile coyotes

- Ravens riding wind currents
- Great horned owls perched
- Coveys of quail
- Cotton-tail rabbits
- Orange-rumped towhees
- Slithering rattlesnakes
- Basking lizards
- Red-tail hawks taking advantage of air currents to hover/ "kite" in place

For me, there have been many special sightings:

- Deer tracks, especially miniature ones
- The green lushness of winter and spring vegetation against the background of a deep indigo sky
- The sky painted brilliant colors at sunrise and sunset with intricate cloud formations
- Views of the ocean and Channel Islands
- Complex spider webs
- Swooping bats and swallows
- "Cloud rainbow halos" or the official name, Brocken spectre, which occur when you look at a cloud and your shadow appears in the cloud with rainbow rings around your head

Certain sounds have filled my ears while hiking this trail:

- Squawking scrub jays
- Mellifluous mockingbirds
- Twittering bushtit mobs
- Rustling leaves/branches that could be... anything!
- Screeching hawks
- Howling coyotes
- Grasses swaying and trees creaking in the wind
- The whip-poor-willing of ground-dwelling nightjars at nightfall
- Great horned owls calling to each other at dusk
- Summer choruses of night-calling insects

Aside from sights and sounds that can be experienced on this trail, your nose may delight in the sweet smell of the chaparral, and your skin may experience the caress of native foliage, or the sensations of the sun and wind, the muscle burn, and the dripping sweat, especially after some of those inclines! Altogether, Griffith Park trails nourish the body-mind-spirit connection. Ultimately, it does not really matter where you start, it only matters that you get out there, connect with nature, and experience Griffith Park, the gem of the eastern Santa Monica Mountains. ✨

Betina Chimarios Papadeas is a Griffith Park hiker who also attends many FoGP volunteer activities

Photos: courtesy Betina Papadeas

It Never Rains But It Pours

~Marian Dodge, FoGP Board Member

“It never rains but it pours.” That expression has never been truer than the last two years. Heavy rainfall during the winter months sent gallons of water rushing down Fern Dell Drive and into the storm drains on Los Feliz Blvd. Yet for nine months out of the year, the Upper Dell is as dry as a bone with no water at all in the creek.



Friends of Griffith Park (FoGP) is actively working on a solution to this dichotomy. We won a Los Angeles County Measure W Safe Clean Water grant for a Feasibility Study of our plan to capture and store stormwater and use it to recirculate water year-round to the top of the creek and to irrigate the plants in the Dell.

Measure W was approved by voters in 2018. It created a special property tax to fund projects to capture stormwater. First, with the drought condition prevailing in California, we cannot afford to let water flow uselessly into storm drains and out to the ocean. We need to keep as much water as we can on site and use it instead of paying DWP for water to irrigate the ferns and trees. Second, the water that goes into the storm drains from our parking lots and streets is contaminated with oils and bits of rubber tires. All that debris flows to Ballona Creek, then overwhelms the Hyperion treatment plant and goes straight into the Santa Monica Bay. We all love to swim, surf, and play in the Pacific Ocean, but we don't want to contaminate it.

What to do? FoGP plans to capture as much storm water as we can, run it through filters to remove the contaminants, and store it in a huge underground tank. The tank would be located underneath the grassy area just north of Los Feliz Blvd. where sun bathers relax near the Berlin Bear statue. Yes, the actual construction of the tank would be disruptive, but once installed, the sunbathers won't know it's there. It will capture not only the water coming down Fern Dell Drive, but also the water flowing down Black Oak Drive, Red Oak Drive and down Hobart Blvd. which also flows into the storm drains on Los Feliz Blvd.

Parking Lot 9 above Trails Cafe will be repaved with a permeable sur-

face. That water will be run through filters and piped underground across the street where it will be put into the creek. The upper part of the creek will then get some much-needed water.

The water that is captured in the storage tank can be recirculated back up to the top of the Upper Dell so that the creek will have a steady supply of water all year. It won't be deep, but it will have a few inches of water so that the creek actually looks like a creek. In the 1930s, Fern Dell had a recirculating water system that took water out of the creek and pumped it as far up as Trails Cafe. That system rusted out many years ago; its remnants are still visible in the little green shack opposite Black Oak Drive. (See *Griffith Reporter Winter-Spring 2023-24 p. 4*) Modern pumps and pipes are far more efficient and can achieve the same result with smaller pipes.

The captured water will also be a valuable resource for the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP). They are currently paying a large water bill to DWP. RAP can use the stored water to irrigate the ferns, native plants and trees.

In chatting with the public about the project, we found that even children understood the need to save the rain water to water the

plants. They definitely understood that putting dirty water into the ocean is a No-No.

In addition to stormwater capturing and recirculating, there are several other community benefits that might be included in the project. For example, the WPA-era walls lining the creek could be reset. The waterfall in the Lower Dell that has not worked for years could be converted to an independent recirculating system so that visitors can see it in its 1930s glory. The little grotto in the Lower Dell could be repaired. The dirt paths could be refreshed. More native plants could be planted. When we polled people on their preferences, almost everyone said they liked all the suggestions. One man commented that he had taken many long hikes just to see a waterfall. Wouldn't it be nice if everyone could see a waterfall on their weekly walk through Fern Dell?

FoGP is reaching out to local homeowner groups like the Oaks Neighborhood Association and Los Feliz Improvement Association, to our neighborhood councils, to the LA Conservancy, to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, to the California Native Plant Society and others to tell them about our project. All have provided letters of support. We've talked to more than 150 people in Fern Dell to explain our project. All were enthusiastic. FoGP welcomes that enthusiasm as we start the process of saving, reusing and enjoying the waters of Fern Dell. ✨

For more information on the important Measure W Restoration and Stormwater Capture Project, please go to www.friendsofgriffithpark.org/measure-w

Griffith Park Updates

~Gerry Hans, FoGP President

FoGP has compiled a roundup of the issues we've been closely monitoring in Griffith Park.



Revised Alcohol Policy Adopted

The Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) picks up considerable revenue from the rental of its buildings for events where beer and wine is allowed. For example, in Griffith Park this includes Friendship Hall for weddings, and the Visitor Center Auditorium for other private and corporate events. That's fine.

In March, RAP piled on far more opportunities for approved events where alcohol can be consumed. By far, the most significant and concerning Alcohol Policy change is that an "unlimited number of open area events" can be authorized by the RAP General Manager. Coming in second, RAP expanded the allowed beer and wine to any kind of liquor. A double martini? No problem!

With one week notice that the approval would come before the RAP Commission, we argued that the "Wilderness Area," which is clearly delineated in the Historic-Cultural Monument documents, be precluded from potential open area alcohol events. Unfortunately there was no feedback regarding our concerns.

In our letter we stated that making it a "two-year Pilot Program" does not alter the fact that conditions for responsible use of park land have not been defined within the revised Policy, especially wildlands. We reminded the decision makers that 800 acres burned in 2007, plus an average of over a dozen brush fires per year in Griffith Park, with 35 in 2023! In this regard, severely loosening the Alcohol Policy is truly an environmental issue.

In addition, there are no conditions in the Policy that will discourage displacement of existing Park users during open area events. This is the same point FoGP has made regarding the Haunted Hayride Event which makes Crystal Springs Picnic Ground unappealing for family picnics for nearly three months out of the year.

Allowing more events that serve alcohol could lead to issues with intoxicated people wandering around the Park or driving after the events. This poses a safety risk, as evidenced by the cyclist who was killed in Griffith Park last year by a suspected drunk driver.

It's no doubt that RAP struggles with budget cuts and already lacks the staffing to properly maintain the parks. Increasing the number of events for more revenue holds no promise for an attendant increase in

RAP resources for security, maintenance or habitat protection. It just doesn't work that way.

If you have opinions on this severely relaxed alcohol policy, please let us know!

Merry-go-round

The resolution of the 50% private ownership of the carousel drags on in Probate Court with no end in sight. The next Probate Court date was pushed out to September. As we explained previously, the historic 1926 Stillman carousel sits inside the octagonal building, owned by RAP. It's an untenable situation, and FoGP is anxious to see RAP acquire ownership with our help.

Until there is a resolution to its 50% ownership now in probate, due to the untimely death of Julio Gosdinski, there is no commitment to maintaining this ride in operating condition. Expensive repairs forced its closure, and RAP is not in the driver's seat.

FoGP and RAP staff continue to see an outpouring of interest to keep the Merry-go-round a part of Griffith Park's rich history. It's the kids and their parents who miss this affordable and magnetic attraction that came to the Park 89 years ago!

Pony Rides

There is no clear picture of what will become of this venue where pony rides have been offered at a nominal cost since 1947. In late 2022, the concession was shuttered. RAP hired an outside community engagement consultant, Placeworks, to manage ensuing controversy with the public. Now that "Reimagining" the pony rides outreach has come to an end, it's of note that both RAP and CD 4 have gone on record saying the future for this venue does not preclude live pony rides. Stay tuned.

Zoo Expansion

Litigation filed jointly by FoGP and the Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust on September 13, 2023, targeted the massive excavation of an unnatural 60-ft deep "canyon," a 18,000 sq. ft. visitor center on top of a high ridgeline, and the loss of native habitat containing rare and sensitive flora, along with 26 City-protected trees/shrubs.

So far, settlement talks have not moved forward, and the City Attorney continues to request delays to prepare the Administrative Record for review by the court. ✨



The new signage can be viewed in the south garden area at the Autry Museum

Photos: Marian Dodge

Rodger Young Village Sign Dedication

~Marian Dodge, FoGP Board Member

On Saturday, April 13 a new interpretive sign was dedicated on the site of the former Rodger Young Village. This project provided temporary housing for returning WWII veterans and their families when Los Angeles was experiencing a housing shortage. The city quickly assembled 750 Quonset huts to house 5,000 individuals. (See Summer/Fall Reporter June 2022)

Several former residents and extended family members attended the unveiling. They described the happy childhood they enjoyed in the racially diverse community.

Councilmember Nithya Raman gave opening remarks. Griffith Trust members, Clare Darden and Mike Eberts, who funded the interpretive signs throughout the Park, spoke of the importance of acknowledging this history. ✨

Dr. Sarah Napier

~Kathryn Louyse, FoGP Board Member

Longtime Griffith Park advocate, Dr. Sarah Jane Napier passed away suddenly in October, 2023 after suffering a stroke. Her contributions to the Los Feliz community are extensive. Prior to becoming one of the founding members of Friends of Griffith Park, she had been on the board on the then-GGPNC (Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council), later renamed LFNC (Los Feliz Neighborhood Council).

While serving on this board, Sarah was also a member of the PROS (Parks, River, Open Space) Committee, which eventually, became the foundation of Friends of Griffith Park (FoGP).

Until her health forced Sarah to slow down, she could be seen at various FoGP functions – distributing materials, engaging with the public, and helping out at our P-22 Day table. Her bright smile and willingness to pitch in will be missed by those who knew her. ✨

Photo, top: Dr. Napier and Big M ceramic artist, Yuriko celebrate the mural unveiling in 2010 – corner of Griffith Park Blvd. and St. George St.

Bottom: Sarah and Bernadette Soter at the Los Feliz Beach cleanup in 2007. This FOLAR event took place shortly after the Griffith Park fire and evidence of the burn could be seen from across the LA River

Photos: Kathryn Louyse

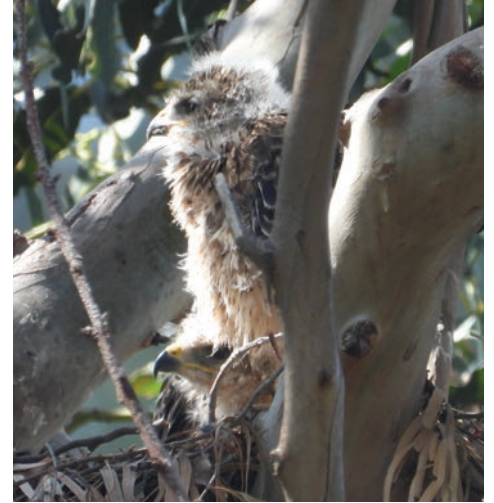


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A Saga of Survival

~Gerry Hans, FoGP President



In its eighth season, the Los Angeles Raptor Study has amassed tens of thousands of data points. The baseline data is important for determining such metrics as re-nesting rates, tree species usage, number fledged, and species-by-species trends. However, valuable learning experiences from anecdotal observations cannot be understated. It's what keeps the Raptor Study's volunteers coming back for more, year after year, many becoming highly proficient and knowledgeable "community scientists." And enthusiastic ambassadors of the program.

The multi-year account of a gorgeous female red-shouldered hawk touched me personally. The story includes all the ingredients of an intriguing romance-mystery series, including poison, a lost life-mate, and a rebound.

2021 Nesting Season

With a tip from a resident, a red-shouldered hawk nest was located at the very end of the nesting period. This species' nests are typically medium-sized and cone-shaped, not large and flat like their red-tailed cousin of the same genus, *Buteo*. The nest was lodged into the forked branches of a eucalyptus tree, not far from my house. It was fairly easy to recognize the nest was used since fresh "white-wash" was underneath and around it. The GPS coordinates were taken, and a nest number was assigned. The recorded data for the nest included only that at least one nestling had fledged and was still being nurtured by parents in nearby trees.

Hawks are monogamous and typically stay together for life, sometimes as long as 15-plus years. I was certain that this pair would be back the following year! I planned to keep my eye on them.

2022 Nesting Season

After Volunteer Training Sessions in February, the nest was assigned to a capable monitor. Since the nest was in my own neighborhood, I also observed the red-shouldered pair's behavior. It's the rarest of the four main local raptor species and my favorite because of their striking coloration and markings.

In March, the pair decided to build a different nest, one tree to the east of the previous year's nest, in a canyon within the grove of overgrown eucalyptuses. By the end of March, the pair began to quietly incubate eggs. While our volunteers usually can't see the eggs themselves, once

chicks are seen (nicknamed "popcorn," since they pop up and down), the data is entered. One chick appeared and later a second. Egg laying and hatching is not always synchronized, so volunteers must always be vigilant.

All was going smoothly for the monogamous pair until May 17 when I received a phone call from an anxious resident living a couple streets away from the nest. She had found a dead adult hawk in her neighbor's water fountain while they were away. She knew of my involvement with FoGP and the Raptor Study. I promptly met her and took possession of the hawk, which was a male red-shouldered hawk. It seemed obvious to me it was from the nesting pair in the nearby eucalyptus tree. My heart sank.

Over the years, FoGP has delivered many frozen carcasses to UC Davis Veterinary Laboratory for postmortem necropsy and toxicology. Could this be yet another case of rodenticides, i.e., rat poison? Most specimens sent away come back with at least one anticoagulant agent detected. The necropsy report was returned quickly, showing no obvious trauma as cause of death. Sometimes coagulopathy (hemorrhages) are detected, but not this time. Bacteriology, parasitology, and heavy metals results came back in time. All negative.

Finally, the toxicology report was delivered showing not one, not two, but three of the potent second-generation anticoagulants, one at a very high level. This was a very interesting finding, as second-generation rodenticides had been restricted from residential use by the pest control industry, effective date of January, 2021. Were unprincipled operators using up their stock a year later? (See AB 1788 California legislation). I was frustrated by another unnecessary death of the hawk, an apex predator known to consume many rodents.

So with two chicks in the nest, Mama Hawk was left with no help from her mate. Could the fast-growing chicks possibly survive with only one parent serving up bites of rodents for multiple daily feedings? I had no idea of the answer. Scientific literature, I discovered, pointed to only one of the two nestlings surviving - which is what ultimately happened. ►►►

▶▶▶ Watching the nest almost daily revealed that the slightly more dominant chick was the only survivor. By June, this nestling, now feathered, was ready to leave the nest. Nature has its way for promoting reproductive success. One fledged nestling is better than losing both. Mama did her job.

2023 Nesting Season

It's January. Mama Hawk had been calling incessantly for weeks. The Raptor Study volunteer and I were fairly sure it's her, since red-shouldered hawks are few and far between in our urban landscape. She had kept her status as boss of the canyon.

There is little real science on the subject of raptors losing mates. For pairs, there is a strong allegiance to a previous year's breeding area, and the bonded pairs will usually hold their territory their entire long life span. But for a single parent, it was a question I had pondered for many months since Mama Hawk lost her mate. Would there be a mourning period? Would she disperse?

Rather than moving, she held her same territory. And her efforts didn't stop. The assigned Raptor Study volunteer and I both observed her movements and behavior. She was relentless. Well into May, it appeared she had still not attracted a mate. Neither of the now-shabby nests from the previous two years was supplemented with new material. By the end of June, Mama Hawk quieted down, as nesting season and juicy hormones came to an end. You can't help but feel sad for this creature that just wants to do what it was born to do. Finding an unattached mate would be like finding a needle in a haystack.

2024 Nesting Season

With ears on alert and binoculars in hand, I scanned the treetops not sure what to expect. Then my heart almost stopped, as I viewed two

red-shouldered hawks at the same time. It's her! Mama Hawk had been at it again, calling, but this time successfully. I was thrilled for Mama Hawk. The male looked a bit wimpy compared to her deceased partner, but beggars can't be choosers. Female hawks are 20-25% larger, anyway. Since their adult plumage is identical, size is the best way to tell who's who when it comes to gender.

With this success came another hardship. On March 9, a large eucalyptus in the grove toppled over and temporarily closed a street, as it

leaned against a house. Several other nearby trees were also removed for safety, including both trees which had hosted Mama Hawk's previous nests. Eucalyptuses are great nesting trees, but awful trees to maintain. Mama Hawk and her beau had been active around those same trees but when the chainsaws began, she was very upset, based upon her dramatic, nervous calls. However, her new mate was less alarmed.

Exploring trees for new nests one street away on April 7, I noticed a tree with foreign green material where branches had grown out from a previous tree trimming. Then I saw a tip of a tail showing just a bit over one side of the nest. Mama Hawk was stone still in the nest, with not even a flinch of her tail. She was incubating eggs. Two eggs, it was later determined when chick heads pop-corned! Wow!

This was quite the remarkable journey for both me, Raptor Study volunteers and, of course, red-shouldered Mama. Persistence paid off – a credit to

Mother Nature who selects the behavior that promotes reproductive success. I hope Mama Hawk lives a long life in my neighborhood with many chicks and fledglings circling in the skies above us. ✨

Photos: Gerry Hans

Anticoagulant Rodenticide Bills passed/pending in California Legislature

AB 1788 (introduced by Richard Bloom) Restricts most uses of super-toxic second generation anticoagulants. Effective January 2021

AB 1332 (introduced by Laura Friedman) Restricts most uses of first generation anticoagulant diphacinone. Effective January 2024

AB 2552 (introduced by Laura Friedman) Restricts most uses of other first generation anticoagulants, including chlorophacinone. Pending

2024 LA RAPTOR STUDY RESULTS

Save the Date – the Final Study Results will be presented
via Zoom on Thurs., Sept. 26



If interested in joining the raptor study next year, please fill out the volunteer application form at friendsofgriffithpark.org/raptor-study/ or contact Nurit Katz at raptors@friendsofgriffithpark.org

If you were a volunteer for the 8th Annual LA Raptor Study, you know how crucial this community science project is for advancing knowledge of urban raptor nesting habits.

All About Tree Trimming

~Victoria Dyer, FoGP Member & Raptor Study Volunteer

Hey there, fellow homeowners! Let's talk about the best time to trim those trees in your yard – it's not just about keeping things tidy, but also about being kind to nature and reaping some pretty cool benefits for yourself. First things first, did you know that trimming trees during nesting seasons can disturb our feathered friends? Yep, those birds, mostly raptors and owls, are busy making homes and raising families, so it's best to give them space until they're done with their parenting duties.

I had an incredible eye-opening experience about the effect of tree trimming on our feathered friends. I am a volunteer with the LA Raptor Study and I recently witnessed a red-tailed hawk being flushed from its nest because of tree trimming nearby. It was very upsetting for me, but even more so for the hawks!

Thankfully, the nest was left untouched, and the hawk eventually returned, but it's a stark reminder of just how delicate the balance can be when it comes to human interactions with nature. It's through experiences like this that we can all learn and grow, finding better ways to coexist with the natural world around us.

When it comes to tree trimming, folklore tradition dictates that any month ending with the letter "r" is deemed safe for this task. But the wisdom behind this adage extends beyond superstition; it reflects a deeper understanding of the natural world and the creatures within it. It's a simple way to remember to hold off on the pruning until the coast is clear.

The best time to trim trees is during September, October, November, and December, once nesting season is over. Many raptors mate for life and revisit the same nest each year, so if you need to trim a tree with a nest, leave it as it is for them to reuse.

I get it – sometimes there's a branch that's just begging to be trimmed, especially if it's causing safety concerns on your property. In these cases, you can still be a good neighbor to the birds by trimming around the nesting tree and staying a respectful distance. Keep a safe buffer of 500 feet around the nesting tree for trimming or construction. Nesting birds are particularly vulnerable during their nesting season. Disturbing their habitats can lead to abandonment of nests, loss of eggs, or even death of fledglings. Safety first, but with a nod to our winged pals.

But here's the really cool part – by letting trees play their role during nesting seasons, you're inviting some natural pest control onto your property. Raptors, like hawks and owls, love to hang out in trees, and they're pretty handy at keeping pesky critters, like rats and mice in check. By protecting the nesting areas, you're setting the stage for your own personal pest control squad – how awesome is that?

And let's not forget about the perks of having trees. They provide shade on hot summer days, and keep it cooler and more comfortable for you and your family. Plus, that leafy canopy adds some serious curb appeal. It's like having your own little piece of paradise right in your backyard.

So, next time you think about trimming those trees, remember to check the calendar and please give these nesting birds some space. You are not only protecting the environment, but also reaping the



rewards of a happier, healthier home Who wouldn't want that? Happy, respectful, and responsible trimming, neighbor! ✨

TIPS on TREE TRIMMING during nesting season can be found @ www.friendsofgriffithpark.org/raptor-study

UCLA Seniors Study LA Owl Habitats With FoGP

~Claire Griffiths, Communications and Events Specialist UCLA, Institute of the Environment and Sustainability

Owls play a vital role in Los Angeles by keeping rodent populations in check without the need for harmful chemicals. But due to their nocturnal activity and well-hidden nests, little data has been available on local owl populations.

To address this knowledge gap, a team of UCLA seniors collaborated with the Los Angeles Raptor Study—a community science program sponsored by Friends of Griffith Park—as part of their capstone project for the environmental science bachelor’s degree. The project focused on understanding the breeding patterns of three owl species in LA: the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) and Western Screech Owl (*Megascops kennicottii*).

The students developed habitat sustainability models by combining field surveys with species distribution modeling—a technique that predicts where a particular species is likely to be found based on suitable habitat characteristics. The models considered factors like vegetation cover, elevation and proximity to natural features to identify areas within the city with high potential for owl activity.

By analyzing these ecological factors, the students pinpointed key characteristics that influence where owls choose to live in Los Angeles’ urban environment. Their findings highlight owl breeding patterns within the city, filling a critical gap in the understanding of how owls distribute themselves and use habitat in urban areas.

The project contributes significantly to the ongoing work of the LA Raptor Study. The LA Raptor Study, now in its eighth year, tracks and documents raptor nests across Los Angeles to understand ecological dynamics in both natural and built environments.

The UCLA students presented their research at the 2024 Southern California Academy of Sciences (SCAS) annual meeting at Chapman University for the Urban Biodiversity Symposium, with the final presentation at UCLA on June 8. Founded in 1891, SCAS promotes scientific communication and collaboration through these yearly meetings. These students were advised by Nurit Katz, Outreach Coordinator for the LA Raptor Study (and UCLA’s Chief Sustainability Officer) as well as faculty advisors Dr. Ryan Harrigan and Dr. Dan Cooper (who also founded and directs the LA Raptor Study).

This project not only broadens the understanding of owl ecology in urban environments but highlights the value of citizen science initiatives like the LA Raptor Study. The collaboration provided UCLA students with valuable hands-on research experience while directly aiding local wildlife and informing future conservation strategies.

“I feel like there’s a misconception that in order to connect with nature one needs to escape into the wild and abandon the city,” said Jocelyn Nuño, a Raptor Team member and UCLA senior. “I think many people would be surprised at how intertwined wildlife and urbanization are when they stop to take a closer look.” ✨



The Raptor Practicum Team members include (front row / left to right): Karine Leclercq, Mélia Leclercq, Stephanie Choi, Nikole Liang, Beatriz Basurto and Ahalya Sabaratnam. (Back row / 4th from left): Jocelyn Nuño and (far right): Andrew Briones.

UCLA Raptor Practicum Team (back row / left to right): Faculty advisor Dr. Daniel S. Cooper; LA Raptor Study Outreach Coordinator Nurit Katz; FoGP President Gerry Hans and Faculty advisor Dr. Ryan Harrigan. Photo by Scott Gruber at the 2024 IoES Senior Practicum Final Presentations, UCLA Campus, June 8, 2024.

Western screech owl photo: courtesy Nurit Katz

FOUND THINGS

Over the decades, Griffith Park has become the defacto repository for all sorts of built, or recycled materials – from broken headstones used along curbs, to large red bricks, to concrete pieces repurposed from demolished downtown buildings.

Remnants of WPA structures are also scattered across the Park landscape, some with an obvious use, while some are head-scratchers.

So where are they?

Everywhere.

We invite you to look closely as you wander the trails because while some of these “treasures” are clearly evident, others are not easily seen.



Scattered along curbs – pieces of tombstones from bygone eras are easily recognizable



Soroptimist Grove drinking fountain and picnic area highlights use of carved stone



This drainage channel is along Vista del Valle leading to Spring Canyon



A portion of WPA wall near Griffith Obelisk. Note how pieces are put together like puzzle, cut from



Matched rock craft at the WPA wall in Griffith Park. Sadly, this block was recently lost



Faux bois footbridge with recycled brick over stream near Boys Camp. Some of the recycled brick from downtown LA also resides in the stream



One of the more unusual pieces – a ball-like object created from concrete rests alongside one of the trails



These structures can be seen off various areas of the Park. Now filled with



The Fern Dell region in Griffith Park holds amazing finds – from worker-created stonework scattered in stream beds to walls interspersed with ferns, and pieces of concrete and wood



At the corner of Black Oak in Fern Dell, is a tunnel where the stream flows under the roadway



The 1917 CCC Co, marked this spot in November, 1935 on one of the catch basins near Travel Town



Before the 1960s, the tiny enclosure for polar bears. Remnants of stonework scattered



Catch basin circular art highlights WPA craftsmanship, circa 1930s. Unfortunately these works are quickly vanishing from Griffith Park due to graffiti or disappearing under soil buildup



Spitting man motif now resides in Griffith Park



Brick red rock used in drainage channel on Mt. Hollywood Drive



Drainage channel on Mt. Hollywood leading to Spring Canyon. Note various colors and detail



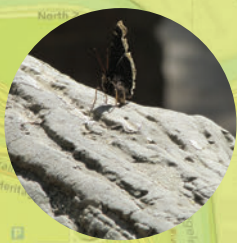
of the
near the
servatory.
pieces fit
like a puz-
m rock



At one time, there
was a functioning
watering system in
the Park. Now only
remnants of the
massive system exist



There are catch
basins of all shapes
and sizes – many are
filled with soil which
makes them obso-
lete in winter
storms



Various styles of
faux bois railing can
be seen in Fern Dell.
Wood details also
differ depending on
the artist



This well next to a
stormdrain is now
filled with debris
from years of disuse



Concrete markers
placed by various
agencies are scat-
tered throughout
the Park



ictures can
-trails in
as of the
they're
graffiti



Unusual rock forma-
tion along one of the
eastern edge trails.
In many places, geo-
logic land shifts are
easily identified



Although the natural
spring well no longer
functions, this
covered well still re-
sides in the Crystal
Springs Picnic Area

GENERAL AREA WHERE ARTIFACTS CAN BE FOUND...

WESTERN SIDE OF GRIFFITH PARK

FERN DELL REGION

MT. HOLLYWOOD DRIVE

EASTERN SIDE

CRYSTAL SPRINGS

TRAVEL TOWN AREA

GOLF CLUB HOUSE

LAND FILL VICINITY



These enormous
pipes will never be
seen – they're part
of the new system
coming from
Headworks –
that's replaced the
Silverlake reservoir



'new' LA Zoo was built in the
Old Zoo housed animals in
ures (for example, above, left:
once graced this enclosure).
of other outbuildings are also
cross the acreage



Locked behind
chain-link fence at
the end of Crystal
Springs, these valves
once served a pur-
pose, but are now
obsolete

Have you come across an unusual
feature along your hike and have
no idea what it is?

Perhaps we can help...

or, if you have something you'd like
to share, reach out to *Griffith Reporter*
Editor, Brenda Rees
brenda@friendsofgriffithpark.org



channel on
ood Drive
Royce's
ote the
ored-rock



One of the colorful
tile insets along Mt.
Hollywood Drive



Short portion of the
original wall along
northbound Crystal
Springs Drive. This
wall may be a rem-
nant of Riverside
Drive, prior to I-5
being built



This stunning,
lengthy, rock
drainage structure
protects Mt.
Hollywood Dr., by
directing water to
Royce's Canyon

Images/copy:
compiled by
Gerry Hans
and Kathryn Louyse
Griffith Park
background map:
Cartifact

Native Vines of Griffith Park

~Jorge Ochoa, FoGP Advisory Board Member

Vines are climbing shrubs that have abandoned a rigid stem for support and now rely on hitching a ride on other plants which serve as support. Over the course of millions of years, vines developed different climbing methods such as a twisting stem which can grab adjacent plants and trees, and tendrils which serve as a tentacle-like device for holding.

Whichever method is used by the vine, the goal is to grow as high and as quickly as possible using trees or any vegetation to reach the valuable sunlight. When no vegetation is available, vines are happy to crawl on the ground and cover large areas with their spreading stems. When a vine reaches the top of the trees and is no longer able to grow higher, vine stems begin to cascade or hang from trees giving the area an interesting jungle-like look.

Griffith Park is home to several vines which serve as valuable habitat

and are extremely beneficial to wildlife. Here's a list of the most common vines that you can easily see on any trail of the Park.

South Coast Morning-Glory

The native morning glory is a noninvasive plant that can be identified by its pink tubular flowers that are produced in large numbers. It is a very fast-growing vine and will bloom from spring to summer. They can be found growing on fences, crawling on the ground or covering other shrubs. The pink flowers are a valuable source of nectar for native bees and many other native insects.

Wild Cucumber

The wild cucumber can be identified by its spiny fruit. During the hot and dry summers of Southern California, the wild cucumber dies back and takes refuge below the ground to survive. The plant starts to grow in the fall season producing numerous small white flowers. Soon after, the flowers turn into a spiny fruit that hang from the vine. Although



South Coast Morning-Glory



Wild Cucumber



Wild Swallowtail

Looking for a Spectacular Sunset?

Gorgeous sunsets now available for viewing,
along with beautiful vistas and wildlife galore.
Check it out – Griffith Park.

the fruit is sour tasting for people, the seeds are eaten by many rodents and are a valuable food source for wildlife.

Wild Sweet Pea

Native sweet peas can be seen cascading onto many Park trails. The sweet pea is an early spring bloomer. Plants can be identified by the clusters of fragrant flowers that range from white to light pink. Flowers provide nectar for insects and the seeds that are produced in pea pods should not be consumed by people since they are poisonous, and should be left for the wildlife.

Chaparral Clematis

Chaparral clematis is found in a few localities of Griffith Park. The plant produces medium size white flowers, but its most distinguishing feature is the fruit which has clusters of white hair-like strands. Many people see this fruit as the beard of an older man and thus this clematis has the common name of Old Man's Beard.

Heart Leaf Penstemon

The heart leaf penstemon can be seen in its glory during the summer months of the years. During the late spring and into the summer the plant will be completely covered with scarlet red flowers which provide nectar for hummingbirds and insects. ✨

Jorge Ochoa is an associate professor of horticulture at Long Beach City College. He often leads FoGP walks through Griffith Park, and occasionally lectures on the fauna and flora found throughout the Park.

Photos: Jorge Ochoa



weet Pea



Chaparral Clematis



Heart Leaf Penstemon

**When You Want to Know
What's Happening in Griffith Park,
We'll be Glad to Help...**

**Sign up today for our monthly e-blast newsletter & more
www.friendsofgriffithpark.org**

Watching the Scene Unfold

~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board Member

“Griffith Park gets my award for The Most Blissful Location to work in,” says Sofia Laçin, who, with Hennessy Christophel make up the talented Studio Tutto who are creating a mural by the Visitor’s Center, an ethereal homage to the often unseen flora and fauna of the Park.

Entitled, “Invisible Neighbors,” the FoGP-sponsored mural depicts rich layers of imagery, shapes and emotions all inspired by Griffith Park’s landscape. The duo is currently working on the center of three panels, which features P-22 as a ‘ghost cat’ peering out from the foliage. Take your time and observe. You might spy a sticky monkey flower, a skunk and maybe a deer. The center panel – and maybe the two adjoining walls – is slated for completion by P-22 Day in October, 2024.

Laçin and Christophel are used to working out in the open for anyone to see; since they have set up shop on location, they have become a familiar sight to the daily walkers and joggers who frequent the Park. “There is a lot of good energy around us. It’s a beautiful courtyard in the shade of this wonderful valley oak,” says Laçin. “We have our regulars who stop and talk as they watch how the mural is taking shape.”

One day, children from a local school visited and Laçin and Christophel were impressed by their knowledge of plants and animals – as well as their artistic talent in sketching the complex mural. “We were just blown away by what they knew,” says Christophel. “These kids knew more than most adults!”

If you can’t make it out to the Park to see the work-in-progress, follow Studio Tutto on Instagram (@studiotuttola) where they post regularly about the mural progress in addition to fun facts about native plants.



Scaffolding, paints, brushes, masking tape and other tools including a computer help Studio Tutto artists create the ode to a ghost cat. Check out their Instagram posts @studiotuttola

Top right: Sofia applies layers to the wall

Photos: Gerry Hans

Go Make Your Special Place Griffith Park

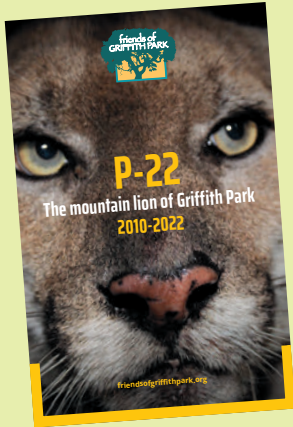
...so much to see, and explore

Just ask Wade!



FoGP's P-22 Booklet

~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board Member



If you attended P-22 Day in Griffith Park and visited the FoGP booth, you probably picked up a copy of our P-22 *The Mountain Lion of Griffith Park* booklet. This bilingual booklet was created as a testimony to our famed mountain lion and also to help educate readers about the importance of co-existing with our local wildlife.

This spring, we distributed booklets to students at Cheremoya Avenue and Esperanza Elementary schools in addition to providing copies to campers at Griffith Park Boys Camp and Camp Hollywood-

land. Booklets are also provided to the Los Feliz Public Library.

Copies of the bilingual booklet can also be found at the Griffith Park Visitor Center, along with issues of our newsletter! ✨

(Are you an educator who would like to use the booklet in your classroom? Contact us at news@friendsofgriffithpark.org.)

P-22 DAY CONTINUES - SAT., OCT. 19 2024

In the Works: Touring the Wildlife Crossing

~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board Member

Early on a May gray Saturday morning, I'm standing with a group of folks on a hillside covered with pink sweet peas south of Liberty Canyon; we look over a grove of heritage oaks at the 101 Freeway and behold the ongoing-construction of the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing, a project, that we just learned, has been 40+ years in the making. Above us turkey vultures ride the thermals and yellow throats are singing. This is a magical place.

I'm taking a free tour courtesy of the Cougar Conservancy that works to help the public understand and appreciate the magnitude of just what this crossing means – to wildlife, neighbors, Southern California residents, tourists, commuters and more. The tours provide historical context and gives us some insights into what co-existence is all about. Plus... it's just darn cool to be this close to this structure, the biggest wildlife crossing in the world, encompassing 210 feet and stretching across not only 10 lanes of freeway, but also Agoura Canyon road. The prime piece of undisturbed real estate is the only place where such a bridge could be created; environmentalists with insight led by then-Agoura Hills Mayor Fran Pavley helped purchase the property back in 1987 and saved it from development. And now, that investment is poised – in late 2025, or early 2026 – to start paying dividends.

Our docent explains the challenges that have made the Santa Monica Mountains an isolated ecological island for many critters including mountain lions. This crossing will expand existing habitat to the Santa Susanna Mountains and further north, the Los Padres National Forest. Species will finally roam freely, with trees to mark, outcroppings to sprawl over and the ability to survey this wild territory.

FoGP Scholarships Awarded to Local Students

~Brenda Rees, FoGP Board Member

At a recent graduation ceremony at North Hollywood High School, four high school students at the Zoo Magnet located in Griffith Park were awarded Friends of Griffith Park Scholarships to help further a career in environmentalism.



FoGP Board member Miguel Ordenaño joined the celebration for the students as they prepare for higher education in the fall: (from left) Jocelyn Zarate (attending Chaffey College), Genesis Bandenebro (UC Davis) and Dayana Velasquez Viruel (California State University, Northridge). Not

present was Landa Hong who will be attending Los Angeles Valley College with plans of transferring to UC Irvine for Biology.

Other FoGP scholarships were recently awarded to college students for their continuing education: Emily Reyna (UCLA) and Juliette Dalicano (UC Davis).

Congratulations students! ✨



We learn all kinds of cougar facts and are quizzed about what we would do if we encountered a mountain lion in the wild. We examine how we humans can better co-exist with wildlife. We dig into the flora that will be strategically planted: 5,000 plants with soil extending down 1-4 feet. We discuss how light and sound pollution will be mitigated so the structure can better mimic the wilderness at night.

We snap photos, ask questions and sigh in anticipation. "These tours fill up fast," Cougar Conservancy Director Korinna Domingo tells me later before the next tour starts. "We are getting folks not just from around Los Angeles area, but from France, Germany and other places." She too is smiling this morning. Families, couples, seniors – it's a mixed bag of people who have come here to learn. "This is a great way to connect everyone with this project," she says. "It's finally happening. And you can see it for yourself." ✨

For more information about signing up for an upcoming tour, visit cougarconservancy.org/docent-program.

Mariposa Street Bridge: A Unique Historic Place

~Marian Dodge, FoGP Board Member

When you think of the National Register of Historic Places, you usually think of significant buildings and great architecture. Think again! There is a new unique structure on the National Register, an equestrian bridge, specifically, the Mariposa Street Bridge. This mini Golden Gate Bridge is right on the northern edge of Griffith Park.

The Mariposa Street Bridge, built in 1939 by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, links the Equestrian Center and Burbank residential area to Griffith Park. Back in the day, horses simply walked across the shallow Los Angeles River to reach the trails in the Park, but after disastrous floods in the 1930s, the US Army Corps of Engineers, charged with reducing the risk of flooding, channelized the river in concrete. With no access to the miles of trails in Griffith Park, a group of local equestrians formed a committee to request an equestrian-pedestrian bridge be built.

In 1938, the Burbank City Council voted to ask the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the Army Corps of Engineers to “construct a crossing which could be used by horsemen and pedestrians to gain entrance to Griffith Park.” Proponents read a letter of support from The Singing Cowboy himself, Gene Autry, and submitted a petition with thousands of names. The Board of Supervisors then instructed C.H. Howell, Chief Engineer of the County Flood Control District, to plan for a \$13,000 steel suspension bridge.

The Mariposa Street Bridge links the Riverbottom, the special commercial-equestrian area that includes the cities of Burbank (Burbank Rancho), Glendale, and the Los Angeles Equestrian Center, to Griffith Park. The Riverbottom has long provided equestrian support services like stables, feed stores, horse rentals, restaurants, and riding academies. The popular bridge provides access to Griffith Park’s 53 miles of bridle trails

without having to risk life and limb on streets full of cars.

The new bridge was soon completed and opened to fanfare in a dedication event on March 18, 1939. Several thousand people attended the ceremony led by Roger Jessup, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, when the bridge was presented to “outdoor-minded citizens of Los Angeles, Glendale and Burbank.” Paula Palmer and Helen Griffith, the granddaughter of Griffith J. Griffith who donated the land for Griffith Park, were among the first riders to cross.

Western Movies and Television Shows

The Mariposa Street Bridge has played an essential role in the making of Western-genre movies and television shows, which were commonly shot on nearby movie ranches, movie studios, and in Griffith Park – the most popular place to film in Los Angeles County. The bridge provided the connection between the Park, the Riverbottom, and ranches in the San Fernando Valley. The significance of this area for filming dates to 1911 when the first studio in Hollywood, the Nestor Film Company, was established. Nestor Film Company utilized the Providencia Ranch as its principal location for filming Westerns. This later became Lasky Studios, and is now Forest Lawn Memorial Park.

According to Hollywood historian Marc Wanamaker in *Images of America: San Fernando Valley*, “From then on, the Valley became Hollywood’s backlot.” There were numerous Westerns filmed in Griffith Park from the 1930s through the 1960s. Famed Western actor John Wayne “grew up across the river from Griffith Park in Glendale,” and could often be found filming in Griffith Park beginning in 1933.

The bridge has long been a central component of the local equestrian ecosystem. In a



June 2, 1940 article, the *Los Angeles Times* announced: California has more horse-flesh and more horse people than any place in the country outside of Kentucky... And the holy ground, the mystic Mecca, the sanctified gathering place for the initiate is out Griffith Park way, north of Los Feliz Blvd., along the banks of that torrential stream known as the Los Angeles River. The temples of the cult are the riding academies. Follow the river from Los Feliz north and west as it curves around Griffith Park to Warner Bros. studio. The stables are thick as ticks and within rifle range of the river. The geographical center of this horsy holiness is Bette Davis’ home, situated where the river bends to the west beyond the Grand Central airport. Here the horse is supreme. Even the homes of the district are known as Riverside ranchos. And every one of them has a stable for a horse or two just as surely as a ship has a rudder.

Mike Eberts declared in *Griffith Park: A Centennial History* that by the 1920s, Griffith Park had become “a favored spot for eques-

Mariposa St. Bridge from north river bank, view southeast, circa 1960s (Burbank Public Library)
Bottom: Equestrian Bridge opens to Griffith Park Trails newspaper photo. Helen Griffith is on the right



trians,” and “spurred the development of equestrian land uses in surrounding areas” like the Riverbottom. In 1954, patronage of the Griffith Park bridle paths was 625,520.

After years of controversy, in 1955-1957, the I-5 Freeway was constructed in Griffith Park, alongside the channelized river. Even with that barrier in place, Griffith Park continues to be of central importance to neighboring equestrian communities, providing invaluable space for horses to exercise.

In Griffith Park’s application for Historic-Cultural Monument status, bridle trails are identified as one of the primary character-defining features of Griffith Park: “Throughout the wilderness, hiking and equestrian activity are the predominant activities.” Griffith Park was designated as HCM No. 942 in 2009.

The bridge is an essential, historic linkage between the two sides of the river. Friends of Griffith Park was delighted to submit a letter of support for the National

Register nomination. Congratulations to the equestrian community for initiating the National Register of Historic Places designation for the Mariposa Street Bridge! ✨



“California has more horse-flesh and more horse people than any place in the country outside of Kentucky... And the holy ground, the mystic Mecca, the sanctified gathering place for the initiate is out Griffith Park way, north of Los Feliz Blvd., along the banks of that torrential stream known as the Los Angeles River. The temples of the cult are the riding academies. Follow the river from Los Feliz north and west as it curves around Griffith Park to Warner Bros. studio. The stables are thick as ticks and within rifle range of the river. The geographical center of this horsey holiness is Bette Davis’ home, situated where the river bends to the west beyond the Grand Central airport. Here the horse is supreme. Even the homes of the district are known as Riverside ranchos. And every one of them has a stable for a horse or two just as surely as a ship has a rudder.”



Adding Snakes to the Long List of Animals Poisoned by Rodenticides

~Dr. Greg Pauly, Natural History Museum of LA County

For more than a decade, Friends of Griffith Park (FoGP) has sponsored the testing of raptors and mammals found dead in and around the Park for exposure to anticoagulant rodenticides. These results, in combination with studies across California, have demonstrated that dozens of mammal and raptor species are routinely ingesting rodenticides by eating poisoned rodents. Most research on the impacts of rodenticides on non-target wildlife has focused on mammals and raptors.

Although snakes are major rodent consumers, only a few studies around the globe have examined whether snakes are also ingesting rodenticides. An ongoing study conducted at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, and partially funded by FoGP, is helping to address this lack of information. Early results demonstrate that multiple snake species are also routinely exposed to these toxins.

What are Anticoagulant Rodenticides and How Do They Impact Non-target Animals?

A common way to try to limit rodent populations in agricultural areas or around structures is to use anticoagulant rodenticides. Once ingested, these toxins prevent blood from clotting. Exposed rodents die

due to internal bleeding several days after ingestion. Non-target animals that prey or scavenge upon these dead or dying rodents can then get exposed as well (termed secondary poisonings). Many types of anticoagulant rodenticides will bioaccumulate, or build up in a predator or scavenger over the course of multiple exposures, and can then cause illness or death.

The above scenario should sound familiar to those who followed Griffith Park's resident mountain lion, P-22. As a four-year old, P-22 was found in 2014 suffering from mange and with high levels of anticoagulant rodenticides. Exposure to rodenticides is known to weaken the immune system, with mange being a common outcome for coyotes, bobcats, and mountain lions. Following his death, P-22 was once again found to have been exposed to multiple anticoagulant rodenticides and was again suffering from mange.

Are Snakes Also Getting Exposed to Rodenticides?

Southern California has been a hotspot for research into secondary poisonings from rodenticides. Research results have caused the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to enact bans on multiple ro-

denticides, sometimes banning public use and other times banning use by both the public and by professional applicators. Nevertheless, some anticoagulant rodenticides are still available for use in California. Increased awareness of the species impacted by rodenticides could help to influence future policy on rodenticide use.

Because rodenticide exposure was common in studies of Southern California mammals and raptors, I began wondering whether snakes might also be consuming poisoned rodents. About a decade ago, I started keeping salvaged snakes from areas where rodenticide exposure seemed possible.

As Curator of Herpetology at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, I have developed a network of people who salvage roadkilled snakes. Over the years, freezers at the museum started filling up with roadkilled snakes that might one day be used for rodenticide testing. The challenge was to find funding to test these specimens. In early 2023, Gerry Hans, on behalf of the FoGP Board, reached out to the Museum to suggest a partnership to fund rodenticide testing of local wildlife. Around the same time, the Museum was awarded a research training grant from the National Science Foundation that included funds to support research by early-career scientists. With funding now available, we could finally defrost and sample the frozen snakes for rodenticide testing.

Over the past few months, I worked with museum researcher Taylor Vasquez to do exactly this. Early results are now in, and over 30% of the snakes tested positive for rodenticides, including the following species: California kingsnake, gopher snake, coachwhip, Southern Pacific rattlesnake, and Southwestern speckled rattlesnake. Four snakes tested positive for multiple rodenticides.

This ongoing study highlights the negative impacts of using anticoagulant rodenticides to control rodents—numerous native species, including coyotes, bobcats, hawks, owls, and snakes, also end up being poisoned. As native predator populations decline from unintentional poison exposure, pest populations are likely to increase making people even more dependent on pest control efforts.



The best way to simultaneously control rodents and also protect the wildlife that would otherwise help limit rodent populations is to use mechanical traps specifically designed for mice and rats. Avoiding rodenticides will help our native predatory species and also decrease the chance that a family dog or cat is also exposed to rodenticides by consuming a poisoned rodent.

The snake study will continue through this summer. We will increase the number of specimens tested, the number of species examined, and the geographic coverage of the sampling. Stay tuned for an update in a future issue of this newsletter. ✨

SEE ROADKILLED SNAKES?

Through Fall 2024, we are looking to add more snakes to the rodenticide study. With temperatures warming, snakes are on the move. Unfortunately, this means that some snakes will be found dead along roads. Fresh roadkills can be salvaged and potentially used for rodenticide testing.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you can safely approach a roadkilled snake (please be careful around traffic), take a photo of the snake, and email that photo to Gerry Hans (Gerry@friendsofgriffithpark.org) and Greg Pauly (gpauly@nhm.org) with a detailed description of the location (best if you can provide an address or allow your phone to log latitude/longitude coordinates with your photo).

If the snake is not venomous, you can also move it to a shady spot so it doesn't continue to get run over. If the snake is venomous, please do not handle it in any way. We are looking for snakes from the Griffith Park area; we also encourage reports of roadkills elsewhere in our Greater Los Angeles area. When possible, Gerry, Greg or a Museum staffer will attempt to salvage the snake for study use.

To include in the study, salvaged snakes must be:

- ⇒ A species that eats rodents.
- ⇒ Within a half mile of houses, other buildings, or agricultural lands.
- ⇒ In relatively good shape. If the snake is more than a day old, smells, or has been run over numerous times, its liver is probably too damaged for testing.
- ⇒ Snakes cannot be juveniles. A rattlesnake needs to be at least 20 inches long. If any other species (for example, a gopher or king snake), the snake needs to be at least 24 inches long. In smaller snakes, the liver will be too small for testing.

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Dr. Greg Pauly is Curator of Herpetology and Director of the Urban Nature Research Center at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. He studies the ecology, evolution, and conservation of reptiles and amphibians, including the Blainville's horned lizards found in Griffith Park. He also leads the Reptiles and Amphibians of Southern California (RASCALS) project on the iNaturalist community science platform.

Photos, opposite: Gerry Hans / San Diego gophersnake

This page: Greg Slak / Southern Pacific rattlesnake with bolus

WE GET QUESTIONS

~compiled by Aoife Maud, Student and Park User

There is nothing quite like the shock of going to take out the trash, explore the untended section of your backyard or peeking into the crawlspace to discover a family of possums or a lonely snake.

Realizing your property likely houses a plethora of wild animals is a discovery which can seem frightening, exciting or just plain unsettling. While it is definitely an achievement for your property to be such a welcoming habitat as to attract local furry neighbors, it is also necessary to take precautions to prevent injury or harm. So, before immediately calling Animal Control or just moving out, here is how to handle a few potential scenarios involving your local critter roommates.



Q: Help! I found a snake in my backyard. Will it bite me?

A: First, identifying the type of snake is critical. If you hear a buzzing rattle, chances are you have discovered a — you guessed it! — rattlesnake. The notorious beige and brown Southern Pacific rattlesnake is native to Southern California and can be found throughout Griffith Park. Although terrifying stories of venomous bites may instantly plague your mind, this rattlesnake species is not characteristically aggressive and usually only strikes when hungry or provoked. So, even if the snake isn't actively rattling, be sure to give it some space and potentially call animal control to relocate him. In the unlikely chance of being bitten by a Southern Pacific rattlesnake, remain calm to reduce blood flow and call 911 immediately.

There are a few other types of local snakes in the Griffith Park region, including the California kingsnake, California striped racer (whip-snake), San Diego gophersnake, and San Bernardino ringed-neck snake, with only the latter being (very slightly) venomous. In any case, take care to leave slithery reptiles alone — they probably are busy eating unwanted rodents or insects and contributing its part to your local ecosystem.

Q: I think there are skunks in my crawl space. How do I get them out?

A: Although this might seem unhelpful now, the precursor step in removing skunks or opossums from your crawl space is to prevent them from getting there in the first place! Using mesh hardware cloth, you can block access to the area under your house. When doing so, make sure to keep the cloth extended four to six inches below ground to prevent skunks or possums from digging their way under. However, if there is already a furry family living below you, it is best to remove them. Although this can be done in a do-it-yourself manner with mothballs or ammonia-soaked rags (both notorious skunk/possum repellents), calling a professional wildlife removal service is the safest and most convenient choice. Animal Capture Wildlife Control is just one example of a myriad of humane wildlife capture and relocation services that can easily (and smell-less-ly) remove skunks or possums from your crawlspace. Although these nocturnal animals might be seen as a nuisance, the SoCal native Virginia opossums and striped skunks you are seeing in LA are essential to their ecosystem by controlling populations of rodents, insects, and other garden pests.

Q: I'm always seeing coyotes on my street! Should I be worried?

A: A California signature canine, coyotes are abundant throughout Griffith Park and its adjoining neighborhoods. Even if you have not seen one, you have likely heard a coyote's yips, howls, or barks, typically with its pack. They are usually present at dusk or night, and it can be somewhat eerie to see a lanky, shadowy dog so close to home — but fear not! Coyotes tend to avoid humans, so perhaps the most important step is to avoid increasing their dependency on humans via food. Make sure to never feed coyotes, and take care to secure trash and food scraps outside. Leash pets while walking (especially smaller ones), and bring outdoor cats or other pets inside at night. Better yet, keep cats indoors at all times - they will live longer and happier!

On the off chance you see a coyote and it begins to approach you, slowly back away, keep small children or pets nearby, and make loud noises like clapping or yelling to scare it off. Additionally, making yourself look bigger by waving your arms can incline the coyote to leave on its own. While hosting a coyote pack in your neighborhood can sound frightening, the canine is hugely significant to our ecosystem. By controlling the populations of rodents and rabbits, coyotes indirectly protect songbird populations — which subsequently decrease mosquito populations! So don't immediately freak out over a local coyote pack living nearby; instead, just leave them alone, and they will likely do the same.

As coyotes, skunks, and snakes each fulfill their ecosystem niche, it's important for us to learn how to coexist while keeping ourselves safe. ✨

Aoife Maud is a student at Marlborough High School. She's hiked and enjoyed Griffith Park since she could walk.

Who is FoGP?

~Mary Button, FoGP Board Member

Our initial member to highlight is Janet Lam. Janet lives in Atwater Village, a neighborhood just east of Griffith Park. I have known Janet since the 1990s when we would run together on trails in the Park. One of our favorite routes was a run up to Mt. Hollywood from the Charlie Turner trailhead, but we also ran several of the trails on the eastern side of the Park.

Janet and I share a love for running, as well as a passion for Griffith Park. Janet became a member of FoGP when we first organized our non-profit, and has renewed her membership every year since.

We recently talked about why she has supported FoGP for 14 years.

What do you like most about Griffith Park?

I love the fact Griffith Park is so accessible to various areas of Los Angeles. You can easily access Griffith Park from Burbank, Glendale, Hollywood, Los Feliz and Atwater Village. You can also access it from afar. Everyone is welcome. It's a bit of nature in your backyard.

What is your favorite area of Griffith Park?

There are so many areas; it's hard to list a favorite. I've lived in the general Griffith Park area since 1987. In the early days, I lived in Beachwood Canyon, off Hollyridge Drive, near an undeveloped area. You could head right onto the trail that leads to Mt. Hollywood. I also like heading out by Shane's Inspiration to hike/run the trails to the east because it's shady all the way to the mulching center. But, I also appreciate the easy access and challenging trail from the old pony rides up to the helipad continuing to the little bridge.

What inspired you to become a sustaining member of Friends of Griffith Park?

It's like KCRW public radio. I listen to the channel daily, so I should be a responsible subscriber. I'm at Griffith Park a couple times a week and I should contribute. We need more nature in urban spaces.

What projects and or accomplishments of FoGP are the most meaningful to you?

There are numerous aspects of FoGP that are all significant; it's hard just to name a few. The legal victories of keeping much of nature intact are huge accomplishments! Keeping the historical aspects of the Park are important, such as restoring Fern Dell. The community outreach and volunteer programs, especially to schools, are so necessary. Plus, all of the research regarding wildlife conservation is pertinent. I'm sure their work with P-22 helped the Wildlife Corridor to materialize. The list goes on and on.

Is there any special issue you would like FoGP to focus on?

FoGP provides so much to Los Angeles; I just wish more people knew about them. They have such a dedicated and cohesive board. More nonprofit organizations should run like FoGP!

Do you have any fond memories from the days of yore in Griffith Park?

We used many of the various play areas with the kids; the one up on the Canyon Drive western entrance to the Park where the Oaks Picnic takes place; the area near the tennis courts off of Riverside. We would go on hikes up Bronson Canyon and once saw a big rattlesnake. We hiked up to the helipad where my son Aaron caught a lizard. I took my daughter Sydney's Girl Scout troop to the Bat Caves. We would stroll in Fern Dell to look at the ferns and water. I took my kids to the pony rides, to the train rides, and to Travel Town for birthday parties. ✨



FoGP members are passionate about Griffith Park!

ARE YOU?



JOIN US TODAY!

Pictured: FoGP member, Janet Lam



Photo: Raptor on wires in Old Zoo



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Photo: Kathryn Louyse



This year's Earth Day was celebrated at Griffith Park's Bird Sanctuary when Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass helped plant a native sage with guidance from FoGP Board member Laura Howe and Volunteer Coordinator Ross Arnold. FoGP volunteers then tackled invasives that re-seeded after last winter's storms.

If you, or an organization you're affiliated with is interested in volunteering some time in Griffith Park, let us know... scan the QR code or go to www.friendsofgriffithpark.org/volunteer.

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